

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 23, 2005

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MARKEY CALLS FOR PRESIDENT TO STOP OPPOSITION TO UN HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT TO GITMO

WASHINGTON, DC- Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and author the Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act, H.R. 952, sent a letter to President Bush today asking why for more than two years UN human rights experts have been denied full access to facilities and prisoners held at the U.S. base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

“The President has repeatedly said that the United States does not use or condone torture, and he has denied that any acts of torture have taken place at Guantánamo. In light of the President’s strong statements on this subject, why then has the UN request for access been denied for the last two years? In light of concerns raised about practices at the prison, the United States needs to show the world that we are willing to allow an independent international body to come in and interview detainees held at the prison,” said Rep. Markey.

Today the United Nations released information regarding requests to the U.S. government to visit Guantánamo. United Nations human rights experts say that they began requesting a visit to the prison as early as 2002 “based on information, from reliable sources, of serious allegations of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees, arbitrary detention, violations of their right to health and their due process rights.” The U.N. experts have stated that “many of these allegations have come to light through declassified (U.S.) government documents.”

Manfred Nowak, the UN special investigator on torture, said that his team needed full access to Guantánamo’s facilities and prison population, but that the U.S. has refused to guarantee him the right to speak to detainees in private.

Earlier this week the President denied the reports of detainee abuse at Guantánamo. In fact, the President urged any reporter who doubted the humane conditions of detainees at Guantánamo to go see for themselves:

“You’re welcome to go down there yourself...taking a look at the conditions. I urge members of our press corps to go down to Guantánamo and see how they’re treated...and to look at the facts.”

“Guantánamo Bay should be opened to the press, as the President has suggested, but it should also be opened to U.N. human rights experts. If the United States has nothing to hide, if the detainees are being treated humanely and in accordance with our obligations under international law, why not allow the U.N. human rights experts in to visit the facility and see firsthand?” asked Rep. Markey.

To view the letter to President Bush and for more information on Rep. Markey’s work to stop torture, please see Rep. Markey’s website - <http://www.house.gov/markey/>

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